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Thousands of new-voter cards in Ohio undeliverable

**By Jim Siegel
Enquirer Columbus Bureau**

COLUMBUS - Thousands of cards mailed by county election boards to newly registered voters in Hamilton County and throughout the state are being returned because the people can't be found.

John Williams, director of the Hamilton County Board of Elections, said the situation indicates that there might not be as many new voters as some expect in a state deemed crucial in the presidential election.

Ohio Republican Party Chairman Robert Bennett on Tuesday said it's a result of statewide registration fraud conducted by independent groups that support Democratic candidates.

"By most accounts, their work can only be considered sloppy, haphazard and, in some cases, downright illegal," Bennett said, noting that the state party plans to take out full-page ads in Ohio newspapers encouraging citizens to stop voter fraud.

Democratic Party spokesman Dan Trevas said the fraud uncovered in Ohio equates to "minor errors" when viewed in the bigger picture.

"The vast majority of those registered for the first time are intent on voting," he said.

Bennett cited instances in 10 counties where potentially fraudulent voter registration forms were submitted.

He said many were submitted by groups he terms "auxiliaries of the Democratic Party": the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and America Coming Together.

The groups paid people to register voters. Some registrations were filled out for dead people, some contained fake addresses, and others named fiction characters such as Dick Tracy and Mary Poppins.

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Jess Goode, spokesman for ACT in Ohio, has denied wrongdoing by his group. He said the Republican Party is scared of the number of new Democratic voters headed to the polls in two weeks.

An estimated 7.9 million people have registered in Ohio, up from 7.1 million at the beginning of the year.

Williams is currently investigating fraud by someone working for ACORN who he said submitted voter registrations for about 35 people who don't exist.

Newly registered voters in Hamilton County are mailed a card telling them where to vote and what political districts they live in. But thousands of those cards were returned because the people, or the addresses listed on voter registration forms, couldn't be found.

"There is quite a number," Williams said, noting that not every returned card is a suspected case of fraud. "People do actually move."

State GOP records, confirmed by Williams, show that through Oct. 4, Hamilton County mailed 63,403 cards to new registrants, and 4,152 were returned - a rate of 6.6 percent.

The number was third-highest in the state behind Cuyahoga County's 14,461 and Franklin's 6,917, according to GOP records. In Butler County, 255 cards mailed to new voters were returned, while 24 were returned in Warren County, according to GOP records. Clermont County numbers were not available.

Tim Burke, chairman of the Hamilton County Democratic Party and the county elections board, said an updated number of cards returned is 5,808 out of 150,000 mailed not only to new voters, but also to those changing addresses, for a return rate of less than 4 percent.

Burke said fraud makes up a small percentage of the hundreds of thousands of newly registered voters in Ohio.

"I think Republicans are attempting to justify what they intend to do on Election Day by raising questions of voter fraud and overplaying this," he said.

What both the Democratic and Republican parties in Ohio intend to do is use a 51-year-old law that allows them to place challengers at polling sites. The parties are recruiting lawyers, law students and others to ensure that people are allowed to vote, or to potentially challenge voters' eligibility.

Bennett said his efforts are likely to focus on heavily Democratic areas where many new voters have been registered. Democrats expect to match the effort.

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As further evidence of registration fraud, Bennett said the Ohio Republican Party sent out its own letters to newly registered Ohio voters, encouraging them to vote Republican.

In the counties where new registration was highest, 3 percent to 9 percent of the letters were returned because the people were not located.

"I can say ... as someone who's been in state politics for 40 years, that the normal rate of return is less than 1 percent," he said. "These results are really unprecedented and frightening."

Ed Gillespie, chairman of the Republican National Committee, joined Bennett Tuesday and said Ohio's issues of voter registration fraud cases are alarming and part of a national problem.

"Whether it's for profit motive or political motive, fraud is being committed in the registration process in a way that makes more possible fraud on Election Day," he said.

"I'll bet you this. If Mary Poppins and Dick Tracy vote on Election Day, they'll vote for John Kerry."

E-mail jsiegel@enquirer.com

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GOP charges voter fraud in Ohio

By Tom Beyerlein
 Cox News Service
 Wednesday, October 20, 2004

COLUMBUS — Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie on Tuesday joined Ohio Republican Party Chairman Bob Bennett in launching a media campaign to counter what they called widespread voter registration fraud in nine Ohio counties.

"The reports of voter fraud in Ohio are some of the most alarming in the nation," Gillespie said.

Party officials recapped a list of allegations of voter registration fraud by canvassers working for private organizations in traditionally Democratic precincts, mostly in northern Ohio and Franklin and Hamilton counties. Among them: the attempted registration of a dead man in Cuyahoga County and Monday's arrest in Defiance County of a man accused of falsifying 130 registration cards with names like Dick Tracy and Mary Poppins in exchange for crack cocaine.

Also Tuesday, the Montgomery County Board of Elections said it will turn over to the sheriff's office two apparent cases of voter fraud. One involved the attempted registration of a dead man. The other case involved multiple registrations of a person listing a Holt Street address.

Leaders of massive Ohio voter-registration drives said there's no evidence of systemic voter fraud in the state.

"What this is really about is that we have hundreds of thousands of new voters in the state of Ohio and the Republican Party is terrified these people are going to come out and vote," said Jess Goode of America Coming Together, or ACT, one of the canvassing groups lambasted by the Republicans. "The truth is, the Republican Party is undertaking the largest voter-suppression effort ever undertaken in Ohio."

Bennett said the state Republican Party this week will take out a full-page ad in some major Ohio newspapers urging residents to report voter fraud suspicions to local county boards of elections.

Bennett said groups like ACT and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, or ACORN, have done registration work that is "sloppy, haphazard and, in some cases, downright illegal" in a bid to defeat President Bush.

He said "the Democrats are conveniently silent" about the fraud allegations.

Ohio Democratic Party Chairman Denny White countered by saying he is shocked that Bennett, a member of the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections, "sat on allegations of voter fraud until two weeks before the election. I would question his motivation."

Boards of elections are required to send letters to newly registered voters, notifying them of their correct polling places. The state GOP also typically sends out letters of welcome to new voters.


ACORN spokeswoman Katy Gall said the GOP challenger efforts "reek of voter suppression."

She said "voter fraud is completely abhorrent," and ACORN has cooperated fully with investigations of fraud by some ACORN canvassers.

Tom Beyerlein writes for the Dayton Daily News. E-mail: tbeyerlein@DaytonDailyNews.com. Staff writer Jim Bebbington contributed to this report.

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EXHIBIT J



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. ONLINE

October 22, 2004

POLITICS AND POLICY

Poll Monitors Brace for Nov. 2

Parties Marshal Lawyers
For Possible Suits Over Election Fraud

By JEANNE CUMMINGS
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
October 22, 2004; Page A4

Wisconsin Republicans are conducting background checks on roughly 100,000 newly registered voters and training more than 50,000 volunteers to monitor precincts on Election Day and lodge challenges against voters they view as questionable.

The project, informally called the Election Integrity Program, is a model for similar efforts Republicans are launching nationwide to counter the massive voter-registration efforts conducted by Democratic-leaning groups this year. Both parties have pushed get-out-the-vote campaigns, and efforts to prevent election fraud. But while Democrats have grabbed headlines by filing lawsuits to protect voter access to the polls, Republicans have been working just as feverishly to make voter fraud a top priority.

This pre-election maneuvering foreshadows how both parties will attempt to steer the blame game if there are post-election legal conflicts, with Democrats arguing that voter suppression skews final results and Republicans countering that they have a duty to protect the integrity of the election. Already, both sides are recruiting thousands of attorneys in the ten or so battleground states to pounce on any evidence of wrongdoing and immediately file lawsuits.

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Question of the Day:¹ About 51% of eligible Americans voted in 2000. What percentage will vote this election cycle?

One element of the Wisconsin program that distinguishes it from those in other states is the Republican party's use of the state freedom-of-information laws to obtain the names of thousands of new voters and run background checks on them. Using new software that can trace addresses and other identifying data, the party hopes to discover if fraudulent or simply flawed registrations have made it onto the official voter rolls. The party plans a major media announcement to disclose its findings before Election Day.

In addition to Wisconsin, a battleground state, Republicans are recruiting poll monitors in Kentucky, which looks to be safely in Mr. Bush's column, and battlegrounds Ohio and Minnesota. In Ohio, the party will today run advertisements in some of the state's largest newspapers urging citizens to report election fraud.


At national party gatherings, Republican state chairmen have been comparing notes, exchanging ideas and sharing results from trial runs of antifraud poll-monitoring efforts during the 2002 campaign and a myriad of special elections. "It doesn't take too many people who aren't legally registered to sway an election," said Rick Graber, the Republican Party chairman in Wisconsin, a state Al Gore won in 2000 by just 5,700 votes.

The Republicans' nationwide antifraud program was conceived after problems surfaced in the 2000 campaign,

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including charges in Wisconsin that homeless people were given cigarettes in exchange for votes for Mr. Gore and a student's claim that he had voted four times. The woman accused in the cigarettes-for-votes case was charged with a minor offense and left the state; the student later recanted his story.

But George Twigg, a spokesman for the Wisconsin Kerry-Edwards campaign, says Republicans have been smarting since their Badger State loss in 2000 and are trying to create a "myth" that the state's election process is fraught with fraud and "on the brink of collapse and nothing is further from the truth."

[illegible]

This ad from the Ohio Republican Party ran in the Cincinnati Enquirer on Wednesday and is scheduled to run in additional Ohio papers.

Democrats claim the effort -- which included outfitting poll monitors in Wisconsin with bright green vests marked "clean and fair election volunteer" during a 2002 test run -- will intimidate inexperienced voters and voter-registration canvassers. Wisconsin, for instance, is among a few states that permit voters to register on Election Day. Republicans deny that, saying a recently unearthed Democratic playbook exposed that party's plans to claim voter suppression and intimidation even when there is scant evidence of it.

The Wisconsin program is among the most extensive of the state party efforts. "We will have the most comprehensive poll-watching program the state has ever seen," Mr. Graber said. "This is not about voter suppression, as Democrats claim, it is about protecting integrity of the system."

The Republican antifraud campaign is being shepherded by the Republican National Committee headquarters, with help from throughout the party. Attorney General John Ashcroft has asked U.S. attorneys to meet with top election officials and make themselves available for fraud investigations on Election Day if necessary. Some Republican secretaries of state have issued regulations to ensure votes -- mistakenly or intentionally -- cast in the wrong precincts aren't counted, but judges recently struck down those rules, saying they run counter to the intent of a new federal law aimed at removing technical obstacles to voting. Republican voters and state lawmakers also have pressed, with mixed results, to require new voters to show identification to ensure that an imposter isn't able to cast a fraudulent vote.

Wisconsin Republicans recently began volunteer-training sessions, including a review of what state law allows poll challengers to do. For instance, they can't use cell phones and can't talk to voters while inside monitoring activity at polls on Election Day. But they can question election officials about the quality of the identification presented by a voter and challenge a vote if they see fit. Their task, however, may be more complicated this year since state election officials passed new rules after the 2002 Republican voter-monitoring program making it the poll challengers' burden to provide evidence of fraud before a vote is discounted rather than forcing a voter to prove they are legally registered.

Republicans have also set up a telephone hotline to accept fraud tips and assembled a team of lawyers that can respond quickly. They are urging law-enforcement officials to join the action. Investigations under way in Racine and Milwaukee have found relatively few registrations written in the same hand or without proper addresses. Milwaukee District Attorney Michael McCann says prosecutors report they aren't finding widespread fraud on either side. On Election Day, Mr. McCann will dispatch about 40 assistant district attorneys to the polling places, to assist elections officials, if necessary, and to serve as neutral monitors.

In the 2002 antifraud experimental run, hundreds of Republican activists slipped on their green vests and tested out the role of poll monitor. In Milwaukee, the volunteers contested the residency of some black voters and in the Hispanic communities they questioned the nationalities of others. Overall, not much came of it. Even Mr. Graber concedes there were "few reports of trouble." But he says the "dry run" two years ago has better prepared the party for the challenges today.

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GOP challenges voters

Party questions validity of thousands in Ohio

Saturday, October 23, 2004

Mark Niquette
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

In yet another sign of how fiercely Ohio will be contested in the Nov. 2 presidential election, Republicans challenged 35,427 newly registered voters yesterday. And both parties named thousands of people to be challengers at the polls.

The Ohio GOP said it is questioning new voters in 65 counties where mail sent to them was returned as undeliverable.

But overburdened elections officials were left wondering how to comply with a state law requiring a hearing on each challenge no later than two days before the election.

"I'm not sure how we're going to accomplish this," said John Williams, deputy elections director in Hamilton County. "We've never had anything like this before."

Those who have been challenged must receive a letter by first-class mail no later than three days before a hearing to answer the challenge — with a lawyer and witnesses, if they choose.

In Franklin County, where 4,219 challenges were filed, officials are considering using the Veterans Memorial auditorium to hold hearings.

"Burden or not, we'll do it to the best of our ability," said Matthew Damschroder, county elections director.

Damschroder said hearings can be short — showing a driver's license or utility bill can prove residency. But if mail was returned once, hearing notices also might be returned — meaning no hearing can be held.

William Anthony Jr., chairman of both the Franklin County elections board and the county Democratic Party, said public notices might be appropriate to ensure new voters know they have been challenged.

Carlo LoPano, spokesman for Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell, stressed the challenges will not result in voters being turned away from polling places on Election Day.

"If an individual's registration is deemed invalid by (a county election's) board and the person shows up at the poll on Election Day, they will be given a provisional ballot," LoPano said.

Such ballots are held for 10 days while a voter's eligibility is determined.

Still, voter advocates worried about the impact on voting in what has become an increasingly contentious election.

"That's horrible," said Susan Truitt, of Citizens' Alliance for Secure Elections in Ohio. "I hope it doesn't affect people going out to vote."

Ohio is expected to have about 1 million new voters.

Republicans felt compelled to challenge the registrations "so any question about their validity could be cleared up prior to Election Day," said Ohio GOP chairman Robert T. Bennett.

The challenges arose from a letter Bennett sent to all voters who registered between Jan. 1 and Aug. 31. The letter, Bennett said, welcomed the new

Challenges by county

Here are the Ohio counties with the most newly registered voters challenged by the Ohio Republican Party, as well as the numbers from central Ohio counties. (None was filed in Madison and Union counties.)

1. Cuyahoga, 17,717
2. Hamilton, 4,718
3. Franklin, 4,219
4. Montgomery, 2,332
5. Lucas, 973
6. Delaware, 749
7. Summit, 723
8. Fairfield, 494
9. Trumbull, 449
10. Butler, 255
28. Licking, 54
37. Pickaway, 31

Source: Ohio Republican Party

voters "to the process" and invited them to vote Republican.

Of the 232,000 letters mailed, about 30,000 were returned as undeliverable either because the registrants didn't exist, had moved or died, or because the letters went to vacant houses or bogus addresses, Bennett said.

"It was an astounding number," he said. "The potential for these fraudulent registrations to produce fraudulent votes at the ballot box is very real."

But Democrats said returned mail is not proof of fraud.

The challenges are "an unprecedented effort to throw tens of thousands of voters off of Ohio's voting rolls," said David Sullivan, Ohio coordinator for the Democrats' voter-protection project.

Bennett said there was no attempt to target Democratic strongholds. Most of the returns came from Ohio's large urban counties — which tend to be Democratic — so that's where the majority of challenges were filed, he said.

Meanwhile, Cuyahoga County Prosecutor William D. Mason has been asked to examine whether the challenges are legal because there could be a conflict between federal and state law, a county elections official said. Cuyahoga County had the most challenged voters in the state: 17,717.

Some legal experts are concerned that there could be lawsuits if each county doesn't handle the challenges the same way.

Yesterday was the deadline for challenges to registration lists. It also was the deadline for the parties and other groups to appoint challengers and witnesses at the polls.

The law allows the parties, groups of five or more candidates, and issue committees to name one challenger at each precinct to question whether voters are eligible and one witness to watch ballot counting.

Only voters, poll workers, police and challengers can go inside polling locations. Both parties have been recruiting lawyers and others to be on hand if there are any problems.

In Franklin County, Democrats filed witnesses and challengers in 495 of the county's 788 precincts. Republicans filed someone in every precinct.

Republicans said they filed 3,500 challengers covering 7,900 precincts statewide, including all precincts in the 31 most populous counties. Democrats didn't have a breakdown but said they filed "thousands" statewide.

Some observers worry the parties will indiscriminately challenge voters in heavily Democratic or Republican precincts as a strategy to discourage people from voting.

Both parties deny that, but Edward B. "Ned" Foley, director of an election-law center at Ohio State University, said state law should provide the chance for the press or independent observers to watch.

In that spirit, The Dispatch filed yesterday as a challenger and witness at precincts in Franklin County and elsewhere. The newspaper asked the committees for and against State Issue 1 to be the appointing authority, and the committee opposing the issue agreed.

"Because Ohio's role in this election is so important, it is vital for the newspaper to observe the process from beginning to end," said Alan D. Miller, Dispatch managing editor/news.

"We filed the required paperwork because it was the only way to gain access to the polling places and elections-board counting rooms under the state's guidelines. We will observe; we have no intention of challenging anything."

Dispatch reporters Joe Hallett, Catherine Candisky, Jon Craig, Mark Ferencik, Spencer Hunt, Kelly Lecker, Randy Ludlow, Dean Narciso and Rita Price contributed to this story.

mniquette@dispatch.com

EXHIBIT L

washingtonpost.com

Ohio GOP Challenges 35,000 Voters

Saturday, October 23, 2004; Page A09

The Ohio Republican Party challenged the eligibility of 35,000 newly registered voters yesterday, an action that party officials said was unprecedented but necessary to prevent election fraud in a state where polls show President Bush and John F. Kerry in a statistical tie.

Most of the 35,000 voters live in urban, Democratic areas, party spokesman Jason Mauk said. Local party officials, joined by Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie at a news conference, said the voters were mainly registered by "shadowy" Democratic-leaning groups and were chosen after the GOP sent them mail that was returned as undeliverable.

The party also announced plans to send election observers to nearly 8,000 precincts, drawing on an old, little-used law that allows at-the-poll eligibility challenges.

Democrats immediately denounced the move as a plot to keep voters from the polls. Returned mail or failure to vote in previous elections is not proof that a voter is not eligible, said David Sullivan, the party's voter protection coordinator in Ohio.

-- Jo Becker

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Some Fear Ohio Will Be Florida of 2004

By Paul Farhi and Jo Becker
Washington Post Staff Writers
Tuesday, October 26, 2004; Page A01

COLUMBUS, Ohio, Oct. 25 -- Democrats and Republicans here traded accusations of voter fraud, obstruction and intimidation Monday as officials grappled with what is becoming a confused -- and potentially chaotic -- presidential election in this critical battleground state.

As Democrats marched through the downtown streets of the state capital with banners reading "Not This Time!" and chanting "Count every vote," Republicans continued to challenge the eligibility of thousands of newly registered voters. This presented state election officials with the prospect of holding thousands of hearings over the next week to determine who can cast a ballot on Nov. 2.

The continuing legal and bureaucratic uncertainties have heightened fears that Ohio could be on the verge of becoming the next Florida, which could not determine a winner for 36 days after the 2000 election. Polls here show President Bush and Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.) in a statistical dead heat in a state that each needs to win.

"A storm is brewing in Ohio," Columbus Mayor Michael Coleman (D) said Monday. "The day after Election Day, we've got to make sure the sun is shining. By that, I mean each and every vote has to be counted."

Among the looming concerns:

- Republicans have already filed 35,000 challenges to voters' eligibility and are preparing to send recruits into 8,000 polling places next Tuesday to challenge other voters they suspect are not eligible, particularly hundreds of thousands of the newly registered. Democrats are alarmed at the effort, saying it could tie up voting and keep many away from the polls.
- Ohio's voter-registration rolls contain more than 120,000 duplicate names, and an untold number of ineligible voters, such as people who have moved out of the state. A review of the rolls by the Columbus Dispatch even found a murder victim and two suspected terrorists among the eligible.
- Democrats fear that polling places will be inadequately staffed and equipped to handle the crush of voters on Election Day. Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-Ohio) said Monday she is concerned that many new voters will not get proper notification from county election boards about where to vote. That is a critical issue in light of a federal appeals court ruling Saturday that voters with provisional ballots -- backup ballots for voters whose names do not appear on the rolls -- must cast them in their own precinct for the votes to count.

In an interview, J. Kenneth Blackwell, Ohio's secretary of state, acknowledged that the state may experience "a few hiccups" in the next eight days, but he dismissed notions of widespread trouble on Nov. 2. "You manage against systemic choking," said Blackwell, whom Democrats have criticized for his dual role as co-chairman of Bush's reelection campaign in Ohio. "I don't think we'll have systemic choking. I don't anticipate the kind of confusion we saw in Florida."

But Democrats, and some election officials as well, say the most potentially disruptive action could be Republican

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challenges of voters' eligibility filed over the past few days. Although some of the more than 35,000 challenges have been withdrawn or rejected by county officials, about 25,000 are pending.

The Democratic Party and the Kerry-Edwards campaign sent letters Monday to Ohio's 88 county election boards asking them to dismiss the challenges, arguing that they are "unfair" and "arbitrary" and that the Ohio GOP has not provided sufficient evidence under state law that the voters challenged are ineligible.

The rules for challenging voters vary from state to state, and officials nationwide are bracing for an onslaught. In Ohio, the state GOP is drawing on a little-used 1953 law to file its pre-election challenges.

Ohio law states that a party can challenge a voter's eligibility if the challenger has a reasonable doubt that the person is a citizen, is at least 18, or is a legal resident of the state or the county where he shows up to vote. The law also states that local election boards must give voters challenged before Election Day three days' notice before holding a mandatory hearing, no later than two days before the election.

It is not clear, however, how election officials can hold so many hearings, or what they should do after them.

Gwen Dillingham, the Cuyahoga County deputy election director, said 15,000 to 18,000 pre-election challenges have been filed in the Cleveland area, a traditional Democratic stronghold. "I don't know how we're going to find those people to tell them there's a hearing," she said.

Republicans have pointed to what they contend is widespread evidence of fraud in voter registration. Making the rounds on the Sunday talk shows, for instance, Republican National Committee Chairman Ed Gillespie pointed out that in Franklin County, the latest Census shows there are more registered voters than there are age-eligible residents.

But election officials and other experts say there is a reasonable explanation for bloated election rolls that has nothing to do with fraud: The National Voter Registration Act prohibits them from purging voters from the rolls for four years after an initial notification is sent.

"It's unfortunate that there seems to be an assumption that there's fraud behind every problem," said Kay Maxwell, president of the League of Women Voters. "There often is a simple explanation. And we're very concerned that these challenges will intimidate people and keep them from voting."

Some boards, including those in the two counties that are home to the cities of Columbus and Dayton, are tossing out most of the GOP's pre-election challenges because the party made technical errors in filing them.

Of the 4,200 challenges filed in Franklin County, officials have determined that 1,600 are valid. Election Board Director Matthew M. Damschroder, a Republican, said that his board will hold the required hearings on the challenges that remain, but will more than likely keep every voter on the rolls and allow those voters to cast provisional ballots.

One irony of the GOP's challenges in Franklin County and Montgomery County is that many of those challenged are overseas military members -- often Republican supporters -- whose mail cannot be forwarded, officials in both counties said.

Although Ohio law specifies that removing a successfully challenged voter from the rolls is an option, that conflicts with the rules laid out by the National Voter Registration Act. Moreover, local Ohio election boards are bipartisan, with two Republican members and two Democrats, leaving the potential for deadlocks.

Steve Harsman, the Democratic deputy director of the Montgomery County Board of Elections, said he worries that Election Day challenges could create "such congestion at the polls" that people waiting in line will give up and go

home.

"The aim of this is to sow confusion and suppress the vote by creating questions about the eligibility of completely eligible voters," said Bob Bauer, one of the chief lawyers for the Democratic National Committee.

Those who marched to Blackwell's office in Columbus appeared to agree. "We cannot forget what happened in Florida," Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), a veteran of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, told the crowd. "And it will not happen here."

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THE PLAIN DEALER

Republican Party challenges 17,000 on Cuyahoga County's voter rolls

Tuesday, October 26, 2004

Scott Hlaasen
Plain Dealer Reporter

Call it the Catch-17,000.

The Cuyahoga County Board of Elections must find more than 17,000 registered voters by Friday to tell them they may be culled from the rolls by Republican challengers.

One problem: the very reason these voters are being challenged is because the elections board can't seem to reach them.

On Friday, the Ohio Republican Party filed papers questioning the validity of the registrations because the voters' addresses appeared to be wrong and the mail from the elections board was being returned.

The voters must be allowed to show that their registrations are valid before Sunday. So today, election officials will begin mailing out urgent notices to these voters to the same flawed addresses on their registration forms.

"It's almost a flaw in the law," said Michael Vu, director of the county's elections board.

The elections board plans to hold hearings Friday and Saturday at the Cleveland Convention Center to review all the challenges. But Vu said the board has never before dealt with challenges to the voter rolls, and the procedures were still unclear on Monday.

County prosecutors said the burden should be on Republicans to prove that a voter registration is invalid. But how much evidence is enough? That's one of the questions that local election officials around the state hope will be answered today by Secretary of State Ken Blackwell, Ohio's chief election official.

The Republican Party challenged about 35,000 voter registrations statewide, saying many were fraudulent. But that number dwindled on Monday, when the party withdrew about 4,700 challenges in Hamilton County because of discrepancies with the precincts listed on the party's forms, said Jason Mauk, a Republican spokesman.

Election officials also reported errors with 2,800 challenges filed in Franklin County.

Others found that some voters were legitimate and had updated their voting records recently. About 100 of the 900 voters challenged in Lucas County appear to be valid so far, said Paula Hicks-Hudson, the county's election director.

Some of those challenged included active military personnel who are stationed overseas.

"We fully expected there would be some legitimate voters mixed in," Mauk said. "We filed these so we can clear these up prior to Election Day."

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Nation & World

Facts on the ground war

In key battleground states, a furious push to get every last voter to the polls

By Terence Samuel

CLEVELAND—After the longest and most expensive presidential campaign in history, the entire complex of issues and questions, strategies and tactics now is reduced to a simple and age-old proposition for both sides: How do they get more of their voters to the polls than the opposition? "We go to their door; we phone them. We go to their door; we phone them," says Anne Hill, regional field director of the Kerry campaign for Cuyahoga County, the Democratic stronghold that includes Cleveland. "Then we go to their door and phone them." She's laughing but not kidding.

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After the dazzle of Internet fundraising, the spectacle of the conventions, the drama of the debates, and the massive TV advertising buys, it now comes down to Virginia Robinson and Murshin Abdur-Rahman, clipboards in hand, going, yes, door to door on the East Side of Cleveland looking for African-American Democrats, whom Kerry desperately needs to secure a victory. It comes down to John Perzel, the Republican speaker of the Pennsylvania House, pounding the pavement, looking for the rare Republican in Northeast Philadelphia.

It comes down to flashlights so you can read canvassing lists as fall days grow darker. It's about ponchos just in case it rains on Election Day. It's about a transportation plan that allows you to move your troops where you need them.

The Ohio arm of America Coming Together, the independent "527" organization working

to elect John Kerry, needed so many vans in northeastern Ohio that they had to bring some from Pittsburgh. The GOP has a ground operation here and across the country that has recruited 1.2 million "team leaders" to get their neighbors to the polls. And they have a "72 Hour Program" that blitzes GOP voters in the last three days before the election. "I would say today we have an operation that is every bit as good if not better than the Democrats," says Christine Iverson of

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the Republican National Committee.

Doors and phones. The Democrats claim to have knocked on 6 million doors nationally and to have made 18 million phone calls. But in Pennsylvania, even Democrats concede that the GOP ground game has improved. "The grass-roots effort is much bigger than anything we've ever seen before," says Alan Novak, chairman of the Republican State Committee of Pennsylvania. In 2000, the GOP had eight phone banks operating in the Keystone State. This time around, they have 28, with hordes of volunteers making phone calls and going door to door to help identify Republican voters and those who, as Novak says, "may be persuadable to the president." Four years ago, the volunteers had made 415,000 calls. Last week it was up to 1.8 million.

In battlegrounds Ohio, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Colorado, the intensity of the effort is overwhelming. "It's going to come down to the ability to get the vote out," says Nicol Andrews, Colorado spokeswoman for the Bush campaign. The difference on election night might depend on people like Megan Hendricks, a 19-year-old University of Denver sophomore, a volunteer on Bush's Colorado campaign. "Now it controls my life," she says of her approximately 30-hour volunteer weeks.

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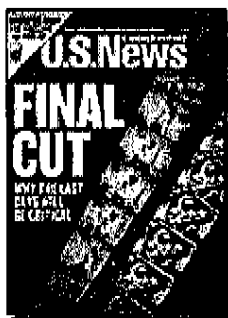
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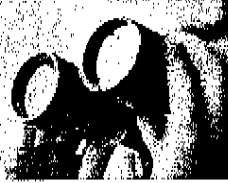
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Nation & World

Facts on the ground war (Page 2 of 3)

On a recent Saturday Hendricks went on her first precinct walk in Highlands Ranch, a national symbol of cookie-cutter suburban growth about 12 miles south of Denver. The targets are Republicans who have voted absentee in the past. Her task is to make sure they have already requested an absentee ballot. If not, Hendricks has request forms she is to fill out with them and bring back to headquarters for mailing.

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Hendricks and her coworker split the approximately 35 addresses by taking different sides of the street. One of the first people they spot appears to be a Democratic precinct walker, given his Kerry-Edwards T-shirt and blue manila folder. Twenty minutes. Two houses. No hits. At the third house, the woman had already signed up for an absentee. At another house, Hendricks encounters Bush yard signs and a chatty resident who wants to talk about computers, colleges, and the local school board. But he is not going to vote absentee. He doesn't trust that his vote will be counted that way. Hendricks moves on, promising to go for hours if necessary. And it just might be necessary. "We are cautiously optimistic that Colorado will remain squarely in the red corner. But we're working for it. 'No vote for granted' is the mantra," says Andrews of the Bush campaign.

For Perzel, the Pennsylvania House speaker, it's not about optimism or caution. It's about hardball and shoe leather; he even changes into Rockports to work the streets. "Pennsylvania, it comes down to turnout," he says. He wants to make sure the Republicans, although a minority in Philadelphia, get to the polls. Perzel, who won his legislative election in a largely Democratic Northeast Philadelphia district by just 92 votes in 2000, has gone door to door for six hours two to three days a week since April. He's lost 25 pounds. Perzel is challenging many of the more than 100,000 registered Democrats in Philadelphia. His campaign office sifts through city databases for double registrations, people with the same names and same birthdates--but maybe different addresses--who are registered twice.

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He's finding plenty and filing challenges to them all. Pennsylvania is a "must win" for Kerry, and for that to happen he must win Philadelphia big. In 2000, Al Gore won the state by a margin of nearly 205,000 votes, but he needed a margin of 348,000 votes in Philadelphia to pull that off. "The Kerry campaign needs to come out with humongous numbers here in Philadelphia," says Perzel. "It's important for me to keep that number down."

Personal touch. Across the nation, a late surge in voter registration has led to predictions of record turnout on Election Day, but the consensus is that despite the millions spent on television ads, the best way to get voters to the polls is to ask them in person. Kerry canvasser Abdur-Rahman, 55, says he can see the difference he's making. "Nothing beats hitting the concrete, knocking on doors, and letting people feel like they're part of the thing," he says. "I see the smiles, the astonishment to some degree, that someone would come to the door to ask them to vote." Abdur-Rahman and Robinson have a list of what are described as "sporadic" voters: those who are registered but did not vote in one or more recent elections. When Abdur-Rahman knocks on Joanne Twyman's door, she opens it and tells him that she was called upon just yesterday. Clearly, that was by one of the groups aligned with, not affiliated with, the Kerry campaign. In fact, she has been contacted four times so far, Twyman says. She's voting, and she's voting for Kerry. She gives Abdur-Rahman her name and phone number. She will be called and reminded to vote, and if she needs a ride to the polls, she'll get one.

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The prospect of a Kerry win in Ohio, says Scott Darling, a field operative for the campaign, "is going to come down to us knocking on 10,000 doors in Cuyahoga County." And that is what is happening across the street from Twyman's house. Robinson is looking for another "sporadic," John Stennett. She knocks on his door. He answers from the house next door where his brother, also on Robinson's list, lives. Stennett is 78, a retired steelworker who came to Cleveland from Alabama 49 years ago. He announces himself an enthusiastic Kerry voter. "There's my man right there," he says pointing to a Kerry button Robinson is wearing. "Are you going to vote?" she wants to know. "Yeah, I'm going to vote." She asks for his name and number. "I don't think I'm going to need no reminder, but I'll give it to you anyway." And to be sure, whether he needs the reminder or not, he going to get one anyway.

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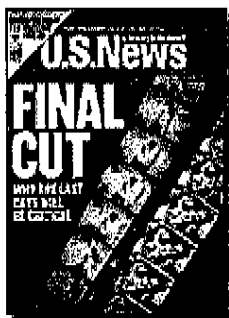
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